

A young boy with short brown hair is smiling broadly, showing his teeth. He is wearing a black quilted jacket over a bright green shirt. The background is a park with a wooden play structure, trees, and a red and white striped barrier.

INSPIRING SCOTLAND

Progress and Impact

Our Work in 2024/2025

For almost two decades we have been a trusted partner of corporate donors, independent funders, high net worth individuals, trusts & foundations, family estates, local and national government.

Our unique venture philanthropy model provides financial support alongside tailored development input for the Scottish charity sector. This model helps charities increase the scale of their work and have a greater impact on the people they help.

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Image: Station House Media Unit

Chief Executive introduction



This year's report is focused on the work we have delivered to support the resilience of Scotland's third sector—a sector that continues to

deliver essential, person-centred support in the face of rising demand and financial uncertainty.

Scotland's third sector is the backbone of our communities. These organisations are often the first to respond to local needs, tackling poverty, inequality, mental health, and social isolation. Our venture philanthropy model is designed to ease the burden—combining funding with tailored development support to help charities grow, adapt, and deepen their impact.

In 2024/25, we managed over **£47 million** in funding across **16 programmes**, supporting **333 organisations**. Our Specialist Volunteer Network delivered **460 projects**, contributing **2,613 hours** of pro bono support—equivalent to over a year and a half of full-time work. As well as continuing to focus on delivering longer term funding for the sector, we also launched new initiatives, including the **Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund**, supporting 14 local nature restoration projects and expanded our **intandem mentoring programme** into Dundee, thanks to new philanthropic investment.

We've worked hard to keep funding flowing, championing the sector and demonstrating the difference it makes.

We've built new philanthropic partnerships where our model can help others—whether through new funding collaborations or strategic support.

We've also continued to bring in skills and expertise through our Specialist Volunteer Network, recognising that volunteering remains a powerful force for good. Time, energy, and professional skills are vital forms of philanthropy, and we've seen how this generosity strengthens organisations and builds resilience.

We've increasingly used the insight gained from our work to inform and influence policy. This year, we've done more of this than ever before—sharing evidence, amplifying voices, and contributing directly to policy discussions. We recognise the responsibility and privilege of our position, which allows us to take messages from the frontline straight to decision-makers.

Our work is rooted in trust, collaboration, and a shared ambition for lasting impact. Whether managing Scottish Government programmes or unlocking new sources of investment, we are committed to building a Scotland where every person has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you to our partners, funders, volunteers, and the organisations we support. Together, we are making a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Celia'.

Celia Tennant, Chief Executive



Image: MusicALL

Impact dashboard

At Inspiring Scotland, we believe that every person, regardless of background, deserves the opportunity to thrive.

We fund and support organisations based on strong evidence of need and impact, and work with them to make the best use of resources. We use evidence and are led by the experience of people impacted by poverty and disadvantage. This directly informs our work and how we invest our time and resources.



£47.5m
of funding managed



16
funding programmes



333
organisations
supported *



190,823
people supported

*Organisations may be supported by more than one funding programme and this figure does not include these. These figures are included in all the individual fund statistics.

The year at a glance

In April,

Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) launched their second round of three-year funding, which supported 33 third-sector organisations to provide independent support, information, advice and advocacy to people using social care and their carers.



In May,

we brought together our 10 partner organisations from Creative Communities Glasgow, as well as some of the 968 participants they supported, for a celebration event at The Pyramid at Anderston in Glasgow.

In June,

SiRD gave evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee at the Scottish Parliament. They shared their experience of being national delivery partner to the SDS Improvement Plan and the vital role of independent support in accessing social care.

“Without your support I’d have just given up. I felt bullied and unheard until you stepped in.”

The Community Brokerage Network, SiRD Year 1 Fund Report



Photo credit: Shakti Women's Aid

In July,

we published the Delivering Equally Safe fund's latest impact report, covering the work of 112 funded organisations between April and September 2023. During the period, these organisations delivered frontline support to 23,368 people, and delivered education and awareness raising sessions to 34,308 people.

In August,

the First Minister and Minister for Higher and Further Education, joined Inspiring Scotland to launch the mid-point impact report of our 10-year youth employment fund, Our Future Now.

“I achieved more qualifications in the first 3 months than I did during my entire time at school.”

Young person supported by Move On, Our Future Now funded



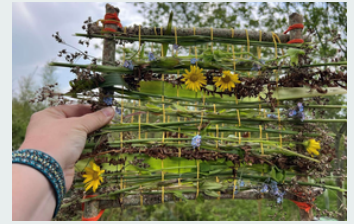
In September,

we announced the first 14 projects to be supported by the Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund, which invests in local nature restoration projects and raises awareness about the importance of locally-led ecosystem restoration.

The year at a glance

In October,

new phases of the Scottish Government's Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (PIMH) Fund and Survivors of Childhood Abuse Support (SOCAS) Fund commenced. Both funds are unique in providing crucial services – for parents, carers, infants, and for adult survivors of childhood abuse.



In November,

we hosted a Knowledge Exchange event on Physical Activity in Outdoor Play, at Glasgow University. Bringing together academics, Scottish Government, local authorities, sports professionals and charities to share and learn about physical literacy development through outdoor play.

In December,

we launched a new philanthropic partnership with Changing Ideas, initially targeting investment towards innovative approaches to improve children's health and wellbeing.



In January,

the Learning Disability Support Fund announced two and a half years of funding for organisations to enable them to promote equality and inclusion and improve access to education, health services and social activities for people with learning disabilities.

In February,

the Survivors of Childhood Abuse Support (SOCAS) fund launched a report sharing their insights from four and a half years of managing funding which delivers vital support to adult survivors of childhood abuse.

“It's difficult for me to comprehend how much my life has changed in the 6 months since I started speaking with my counsellor, but the changes are all very much for the better.”

Survivor, 2020-2024 SOCAS report



In March

with thanks to a funding partnership with Northwood Trust, we launched intandem in Dundee with TCA.

“Honestly, a mentor can make you feel so much better about yourself. There will be one moment that you'll never forget, and you'll always be thankful for that.”

Young person mentored through Intandem

Improving Life Chances for Children & Young People

£12.6m

of funding managed

7

funding programmes

144

organisations supported

We believe every child and young person deserves the opportunity to thrive, at every stage of life. From the earliest days of parenthood through to the transition into adulthood, our work is rooted in the belief that consistent, compassionate support transforms futures.

Funds which sit under our strategic aim of improving life chances for children and young people target funding in the sector to deliver vital support for parents and babies during the perinatal period, champion outdoor play as essential for healthy development, and provide mentoring for young people with care experience. We are delivering three long-term employability focused funds and, as fund manager of CashBack for Communities, ensure diversionary activities and tailored support for those affected by the criminal justice system.

As part of our commitment to delivering support for babies, children and young people, we also run Willow Den - a fully outdoor nature-based early learning and childcare service - which operates as a not-for-profit trading arm of Inspiring Scotland. The nursery supported 54 children during this period, is located at Spartans Football Club in Edinburgh, and has partnership status with the City of Edinburgh Council.

These interventions are not isolated – they're part of a journey of support provided by skilled staff, youth workers and volunteers.

We know that happy, healthy childhoods lead to positive adult lives, and that support must be sustained and responsive throughout.



Image: PEEK



£465k funding **10** organisations funded

Supports the most disadvantaged young people furthest from the labour market to gain skills and confidence through education, employment and training. Funded by the Hub Community Foundation.



£6.2m funding **29** organisations funded

Delivers positive change for young people through investment in diversionary youth work and longer term life-changing intervention projects. Funded by the Scottish Government, and managed by Inspiring Scotland.



£97k funding **5** organisations funded

Funded by Changing Ideas, to support innovative ways of addressing children's health and wellbeing.



£803k funding **12** organisations funded

Delivers a National Mentoring Programme for care experience children helping them build a consistent, trusting relationship with an adult role model.



£2.9m funding **12** organisations funded

Supports young people into education, employment and training — and supports a generation of young people to flourish. OFN is in year six of a ten-year fund.



£970k funding **34** organisations funded

Provides support for mothers, infants and their families who need mental health support in the perinatal period, decreasing feelings of isolation, and supporting parents and carers to better meet the physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs to their children. Fund managed on behalf of the Scottish Government.



£720k funding **36** organisations funded

Promotes playing and learning outdoors so children can reach their full potential and boost their health, wellbeing, development and connection to our natural world. Delivers a range of programmes including Active Play, Outdoor Community Play, practitioner support and training.



£980k funding **6** organisations funded

Transforms the life chances of people aged between 16 and 25 who are facing significant barriers to reach their potential and empower them to create positive changes in their lives. Funded by the Distillers' Charity.

Flourishing Lives

£34.6m

**of funding
managed**

8

**funding
programmes**

250

**organisations
supported**

We believe that everyone in Scotland deserves, and has a right, to live their life to their maximum ability and this work is best informed and driven by the people who experience the challenges most directly.

Funds which sit under our strategic aim of Flourishing Lives support, develop, and learn from individuals and organisations that help people and communities who face barriers to inclusion, and who may need support to thrive and live independently.

Our work supports people who are disabled by society, provides support after an Autism diagnosis, or ensures that people who use social care have access to independent support, advice and advocacy. We are the Fund Managers of the only dedicated fund supporting adult survivors of childhood abuse alongside funds focused on reducing gender based violence, and supporting those who face discrimination due to their identities, where they live, and the intersections between them.

The support provided by these funds is essential to building a fair and thriving Scotland. When we invest in people who face the greatest barriers to inclusion, we unlock potential, strengthen communities, and challenge the systems that perpetuate inequality. This works to ensure that everyone—regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances—has the opportunity to live independently, with dignity and purpose.



Image: Boots and Beards



£1.1m funding **14** organisations funded

Make Scotland a more accessible, inclusive and understanding place for autistic people to learn, work and live. Fund managed on behalf of the Scottish Government.



£280k funding **9** organisations funded

Support community-led organisations within Glasgow to develop initiatives involving culture and creative arts to realise interlinked benefits for empowering people and communities through cultural activities. Funded by Glasgow City Council's Communities and Place Fund, part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.



£19.1m funding **110** organisations funded

Support third sector organisations and public bodies to contribute to the priorities and outcomes of the Equally Safe Strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. Fund managed on behalf of Scottish Government.



£8.3m funding **48** organisations funded

Funds organisations focused on tackling discrimination, furthering equality and advancing the realisation of human rights. Fund managed on behalf of the Scottish Government.



£800k funding **6** organisations funded

Supports charities and social enterprises from the Learning Disability sector to improve resilience and sustainability so they can deliver on key aspects of national learning disability strategy. Fund managed on behalf of the Scottish Government.



£2.9m funding **32** organisations funded

Provides local independent support, information, advice and advocacy to help people and carers make informed decisions and plans for social care, maximising their choice and control under self-directed support options. Fund managed on behalf of the Scottish Government.



£2.3m funding **31** organisations funded

Supports adult survivors of childhood abuse to have equal access to services which enable them to enjoy the highest attainable standard of living, health, wellbeing and family life. Fund managed on behalf of the Scottish Government.



£300k funding

After 12 years of delivering this place based programme, we successfully embedded and empowered Link Up in the community.

Climate Action

£140k

**of funding
managed**

1

**funding
programme**

14

**organisations
supported**

Building on our existing work and commitment to reducing carbon emissions, supporting funded organisations, and contributing to national climate conversations, we launched the Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund, integrating climate action as a core part of our organisational activity.

In May 2024, 14 projects received a total of £146,000 in funding, with an additional £1,500 per project allocated for fundraising, to support the future development and growth of their work. This fund is a collaborative effort, administered by Inspiring Scotland and supported by The Carman Family Foundation, the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, which is managed by NatureScot, and others.



The projects span both rural and urban settings and cover a range of habitats including wetlands, woodlands, peatlands, and meadows. Activities include professional ecological surveys, citizen science initiatives, enhanced community engagement, and project design and costing.

We continue to evolve the programme and seek further investment to grow the scale and sustainability of the Fund, with a second round of funding opening for more applications later in 2025.

We also remain active in sector-wide initiatives, including chairing the Scottish Funders Forum's Climate subgroup and participating in the Everyone's Environment Funder Learning Group. Our Chief Executive is also part of the Environmental Funders Network's Advisory Group.



Image: Kilsture Forest Community Group

Challenging Ourselves

Since 2008, we have been committed to addressing Scotland's most pressing social challenges and creating a fairer, more equal society.

Achieving this requires us to continually challenge ourselves – to embrace new ways of working, adapt, and learn from others.

Our philanthropic model is built on relationships. We know that it's essential to listen to the organisations within our portfolio who are delivering vital frontline projects and services. To support this relationship-driven approach, we've been working internally over the last year to improve our systems and processes, so we can be more effective and outward-looking.

We've undertaken projects to enhance our grant payment and grant monitoring systems, our stakeholder engagement management, and processes around engaging and managing our Specialist Volunteer Network offer. These improvements increase efficiency and free up staff time to focus on building stronger relationships, allowing us to engage with organisations in more meaningful ways.

Each year, we conduct a partner survey with these organisations to gather feedback on our work as a funding partner. The 2025 partner survey provided valuable insights into what we're doing well, and where we can do better.



“We feel really supported because of all the extras that are provided outwith the funding: access to a network, relationships with grant managers, access to training, resource newsletters, regular communications. I think Inspiring Scotland are leading the way in terms of funder/organisation relationships.”

2025 partner survey respondent

One clear message from this survey was the value of portfolio days and training events. These gatherings offer organisations time and space to connect, learn and collaborate. They help build networks, foster peer support, share best practice, and create a sense of belonging and togetherness in what can be challenging work.



“The meetings make us feel heard and acknowledged and that we are people rather than numbers and make us feel part of a group that genuinely cares. Coming together strengthens the group which in turn strengthens the organisations and ultimately the clients we support.”

2025 partner survey respondent

We know there is still more to do. Organisations have highlighted that the lack of long-term funding streams is putting significant pressure on organisations, staff and service users. To continue delivering life-changing support, these organisations require longer-term investments which allow them to plan strategically, retain quality staff, and build sustainable services that respond to the evolving needs of their communities.

We strengthen the organisations and communities that tackle social issues so they can better address those issues and help more people.



Strengthen organisations and communities

82% of respondents* agree or strongly agree being part of an Inspiring Scotland portfolio has supported better evaluation and impact information about their work

Strengthening communities through outdoor play

The Children's Outdoor Opportunities, Places & Spaces (COOPS) project, which was delivered by Inspiring Scotland's Thrive Outdoors team in partnership with Glasgow City Council's Early Learning and Childcare service, demonstrates how targeted support can strengthen local organisations and communities to better address social challenges.

The project took place across five wards in Glasgow and explored children's opportunities to access outdoor play in their communities, in order to determine the potential of developing outdoor and nature-based solutions for school-aged childcare.

The project looked at how – if delivered in a way that enables parents to access training, education and employment – outdoor play could contribute to alleviating the negative impacts of poverty and disadvantage.

The project generated detailed insights into how outdoor spaces are used and perceived, as well as how they could be improved to meet local needs. This evidence base is informing strategic planning, including Glasgow's Play Sufficiency Assessment process and will be further developed to contribute to Glasgow's Liveable Cities and Child Friendly Cities ambitions.

Taking intandem to Dundee

Intandem launched a new mentoring programme in Dundee specifically tailored to support children and young people aged 7 - 15 living in kinship care. This unique family mentoring model pairs volunteer mentors with young people to foster positive, trusted relationships through regular meetups. The programme also

ensures kinship carers receive the support they need. With Dundee home to an estimated 400 kinship families, this new programme will offer a much-needed breathing space for them and build trust and confidence in young people during a challenging time in their lives.

We identified that Dundee should be a priority area for intandem's expansion due to the increasing numbers of children with care experience. Through building relationships with Dundee City Council Children's Social Work team, and working with existing funded partners in the city, we produced a case for support for investment and secured three years' funding from the Northwood Charitable Trust.

The Power of Creativity


Being involved in cultural activity has the power to connect, inspire and transform people's lives. The Creative Communities Glasgow fund builds on this, recognising the broad interlinked benefits of participating in cultural activities for people and communities.

Funded by Glasgow City Council's Communities and Place Fund, part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Creative Communities Glasgow supported 734 participants to take part in regular activity up to March 2025, and 2,806 participants to take part in one-off activities.

One example of an activity made possible through the funding was "Toonspeak Does Panto": a vibrant, large-scale production rooted in the Scottish pantomime tradition. Delivered in North Glasgow, the project empowered young people to take the lead in every aspect of the creative process.

Supported by Toonspeak Young People's Theatre, participants developed the storyline, rehearsed performances, designed and built the set, crafted props and costumes, and composed an original musical score. The project culminated in a series of public performances, celebrated by friends, families, and the wider community.

*Respondents from our 2025 partner survey

A photograph of two young women wearing hijabs. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored patterned hijab and a dark green sweater. The woman on the right is wearing a black hijab and a black top with a pink sleeve. They are both smiling and looking down at a document on a table. The background is slightly blurred, showing an indoor setting.

We are committed to share learning and use our voice to inform and influence government, local authorities and public bodies so that they can better understand and react to social issues faced by Scotland's people.

Inform and influence

92% of respondents agree or strongly agree that being part of an Inspiring Scotland portfolio means there is better understanding and recognition of the work of organisations like theirs and the difference they make

Over the last year, we've used our position as a trusted partner to contribute to policy discussion and legislative processes, sharing evidence from our funded work to highlight the realities faced by people and communities across Scotland.

- We provided written and oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Social Justice and Social Security Committee enquiry into how the Scottish Government's approach to fair and efficient funding can contribute to the continued effectiveness of the third sector.
- We provided evidence to the Health and Social Care and Sport Committee as part of their post-legislative scrutiny of the Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2023.
- We participated in a round-table discussion on child poverty, family and wellbeing, and public services with the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice.
- We provided support to the Scottish Government in implementing its new Fair Work First grant conditions – offering challenges, advice and solutions as we try to ensure that the evidence requirements are fit for purpose for the third sector and fund managers.
- We led a consultation exercise with funded organisations on the future Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2026-2030, providing detailed feedback and insight.
- We use anonymised data from our Matrix System – which records detailed information about every young person supported through Our Future Now and the Youth Action Fund – to provide evidence to

Scottish Government Employability policy colleagues and Ministers. This helped amplify the voices of young people who are often unheard and informed policy discussions about their needs.

- Intandem's Young Person Panel 'In Voice' attended the Promise Oversight Board Parliamentary reception and met with First Minister and other politicians.
- In 2021 the Scottish Government and COSLA's Towards Transformation Plan set out to ensure that Scotland changed for autistic people and people with learning disabilities. This included a new leadership and engagement process putting the voices of autistic people and people with learning disabilities at its heart. Between 2021 and 2025, Inspiring Scotland (autism workstream) and The Scottish Assembly (learning disability workstream) led on the involvement of people in this key policy development.

This work focused on improving access to mental health support and services. It began with understanding the need from people's perspectives, working together to prioritise action and then develop a response to effect change. This person-centred process engaged key stakeholders to identify, plan and implement actions to improve the way health services are provided to, and experienced by, autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

This autistic workstream included: a film on autistic people's experiences of accessing GP healthcare; posters for GP practices and health services, which were sent to 900 GP practices across Scotland; an autism informed services book, supporting healthcare professionals working with autistic adults in the NHS; and a webinar to explain how the resources can be used with NHS Education Scotland, attended by 404 health practitioners.

This programme has provided extensive learning in the participation and engagement of autistic people and people with learning disabilities in national policy development.

We encourage new ideas and better ways of working to tackle social issues in more effective ways.



Encourage new ideas

78% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have learnt a new skill or gained new knowledge by being part of an Inspiring Scotland portfolio

Innovation through Active Play

Funding from the Scottish Government, Active Scotland Division allowed us to develop a model of physical activity through active play for children with complex needs. Focusing on inclusion is a priority for Thrive Outdoors to ensure all babies, children and young people can access their right to play in Article 31 of the UNCRF.

“Speaking about a child who uses a walking frame, one practitioner said:

“I have never seen her like this before. It's great to see her moving and pushing the pedals with her legs.”



Image: PEEK

Supporting Innovation in Children's Health and Wellbeing

We worked with Changing Ideas to develop and launch a new £100,000 fund designed to support children's health and wellbeing using technology.

This funding supports organisations to try out an idea, test a new way of working, or investigate something that could lead to positive changes in outcomes for young people in Scotland. The fund supports 5 organisations to test these scalable solutions, with approximately 110 people directly benefiting during the funded period, and many more benefitting in the long term.

“David Graham, founder of Changing Ideas said:

“As our name suggests, we want to support ideas that can make a difference. Working with the team at Inspiring Scotland makes this a reality and hopefully brings about long term positive change where it matters.”

“Celia Tennant, Chief Executive of Inspiring Scotland, said:

“It is really exciting to create the opportunity for ideas to move into action through this partnership [...] we know there is not a shortage of good ideas. With time and investment many of these ideas could bring validation and evidence that a new approach could work.”

Given the importance of volunteers to Inspiring Scotland's vision and mission, we undertook research to better understand the motivations of volunteers in Scotland.

“Catalysts for Change” captured the latest insights on volunteering and helped us understand how our programmes, which are dependent on volunteers may need to evolve and develop. We shared this research publicly in the hope that it was of use to others and as part of our collective effort to continue to support and nurture volunteering in Scotland.

We make it possible for philanthropists, government, public bodies and charities to spend money more effectively and tackle poverty and disadvantage.



Make money go further

94% of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed that there is benefit, over and above funding, for their organisation by being part of an Inspiring Scotland portfolio

A Multi-Investor Approach to Ecosystem Restoration

In September 2024, we selected 14 community groups to develop local nature restoration projects through the Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund (NEF). This fund is a collaborative effort, administered by Inspiring Scotland and supported by The Carman Family Foundation, the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, which is managed by NatureScot, and others.

The Fund provides direct project funding to support the development stages of ecosystem restoration. Additionally, each project receives up to £1,500 to be spent on fundraising support to enable the future development, growth and sustainability of their projects.



Bill Carman of The Carman Family Foundation, which catalysed the fund, said:

“We established the fund because we knew that in communities across Scotland there was a real desire to be doing more to deliver ambitious ecosystem restoration projects locally.

“The Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of local ecosystem restoration and address some of the barriers faced by communities to undertake this work. I look forward to monitoring the progress of each project and the difference being made.”

Transforming Life Chances Through Collective Investment

2024 marked the mid-point of our 10-year fund, Our Future Now (OFN), which aims to transform the life chances of young people unfairly disadvantaged by their

circumstances. This long-term, multi-investor fund has been supporting Scotland's most vulnerable 14-25 year olds for the past six years through a portfolio of 12 organisations.



Launching the midpoint Report during a visit to Move On, First Minister John Swinney said:

“This fund has been a great success over the past five years. To have helped almost 25,000 young people develop their skills and find career opportunities is a real achievement. I want everyone in Scotland, whatever their circumstances, to look to the future with a sense of optimism.

“Eradicating child poverty and growing the economy are two of my main priorities, so I am pleased the Scottish Government is contributing £1.7 million this year to allow 4,500 young people to be supported by Our Future Now.

“We know that funding will also result in further generous contributions from private partners, providing real value for public money. That combined support means Inspiring Scotland can help more young people across the country, like those I had the opportunity to meet on my visit to Move On.”



Image: Move On

We support, develop and connect the people who are at the forefront of tackling social issues so they can share their knowledge and have a greater collective impact.



Support, develop and connect people

74.7% of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed that their organisation has greater partnerships and networks from being part of the Inspiring Scotland portfolio

Connecting the Organisations Driving Equality Forward

The Equality and Human Rights (EHR) Fund supports 47 organisations working to promote equality, uphold human rights, and tackle discrimination in line with Scottish Government policy.

Over the last three years, Inspiring Scotland has played a central role in bringing these organisations together, fostering a collaborative environment that significantly enhances the value of the funding. We've helped organisations build meaningful connections, exchange expertise and co-create solutions.

As a result, organisations report increased co-production, information sharing and joint working. There is deeper intersectional understanding across the portfolio, with groups able to draw on each other's practice and expertise. This has led to more effective services and better outcomes.

This networking and facilitation role has proven to be a key non-financial enabler of impact, helping to build a more connected, resilient and strategic equality and human rights sector in Scotland.

Strengthening Survivor Support through Shared Learning

The Survivors of Childhood Abuse Support (SOCAS) Fund has been managed by Inspiring Scotland since its inception in 2020. Over this time, we have gathered extensive evidence of the quality, reach and impact of the work delivered by funded organisations across Scotland.

This year, our focus has been on sharing learning and strengthening connections across the sector. Through the SOCAS Insights Report 2020-2024, and the

Trauma Informed Grantmakers Community of Practice, we are helping to build a shared understanding of what trauma informed, survivor-centred support looks like, and why it matters.

Much has been achieved, but there is also still much more to be done to ensure that survivors across Scotland can access the support they deserve, and that funding keeps pace with the level of demand.

Working together to gain insight into local needs

Working with the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council, our Delivering Equally Safe team played a pivotal role in producing a locality-based needs assessment focused on support services for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in north east Glasgow.

We brought together stakeholders to explore what was needed to help future investment in local services and surface gaps in collective knowledge and data.

This collaborative process helped shape and fund the research, ensuring it could be used by multiple agencies and used to support ongoing conversations about partnership working in the area.

The final report provides valuable insights for policy makers and funders and offers a unique perspective on the specific issues facing survivors of GBV in a local community. It highlights how systemic issues such as poverty create additional barriers to accessing support and identifies the specific challenges faced by marginalised groups in the community – including migrant women, disabled women, and those facing racism or discrimination. It highlighted the lack of local trauma-informed, person-centred support.



Image: The Sound Lab

Specialist Volunteer Network

One of the key ways we deliver our model is through the generous contribution of specialist volunteers, who share their time, expertise, and skills as part of our Specialist Volunteer Network to support and strengthen the sector.

This network of almost 300 skilled individuals from a range of backgrounds draws on the expertise of individuals from across sectors to increase capacity and strengthen the third sector.

Last year, our Specialist Volunteers delivered 460 projects for third sector organisations. These 2,613 hours of support equates to over a year and a half of full-time work. The support spanned all areas of expertise, from communications strategies to business development, HR support, legal advice and more.

Strengthening governance

48 organisations also received in-depth governance and board development support, helping them strengthen leadership, clarify trustee roles, and improve board effectiveness. In addition, Specialist Volunteers continue to play a role in strengthening the governance of charities by joining charity boards, with 58 volunteers now active as charity Trustees.

Upskilling and access to experts

Over the year, we delivered 18 free online workshops to 369 attendees. Delivered pro bono by our network of private sector partners, this was the most comprehensive offering to date, and included topics such as law, intellectual property, cyber resilience, organisational strategy, artificial intelligence, and more.

“

“We have been linked with an expert on the return on investment of the work we do...This has helped up skill our organisation and help us to put a value on the impact our work.”

2025 partner survey respondent

“

“The support from the SVN has been invaluable. Being able to access the information and advice that otherwise we wouldn't have been able to has been fantastic.”

2025 partner survey respondent



Helping charities put their best foot forward

Disability Equality Scotland (DES) is a membership organisation for disabled people and disability groups/organisations that receives funding through the Equality & Human Rights Fund.

In 2024, DES required a strategic review of its communications and knew it needed external support to bring in the right skills to do the job. Through SVN, they were connected with *We are Brass Tacks* (WABT), a culture change and communications agency.

Over nine months, the agency worked closely with DES through online and in-person workshops, supported by follow-up tasks and resources. They introduced DES to new technologies and engagement techniques, helping the team rethink how they connect with their members and grow their reach; they also co-created a communications strategy, giving the DES team a solid framework for sharing their mission and key messages.

In total, the agency delivered **179 hours of pro bono support, valued at £35,800**. DES found their approach hands-on and relational, acting more like “the colleague down the corridor” than a traditional consultant.

The impact of their support has been significant. DES have seen an increase in membership and social media following, particularly on LinkedIn. They are now delivering more coordinated and consistent messaging across both internal and external channels, and have shifted to two-way engagement with their members. They have also fostered an organisation-wide involvement in communications, from promoting Easy Read services to sharing research findings.

Altogether, this support has allowed DES to strengthen their communications through clear guidance and templates, allowing their strategy to be implemented in daily practice.

“

Speaking about their experience, Disability Equality Scotland said:

“WABT were amazing, they spent time getting to know the organisation and gave us bespoke feedback and support – rather than a cookie cut template. This made it real to Disability Equality Scotland and linked with our work.”

Funding across Scotland

Local Authority 24/25 Funding

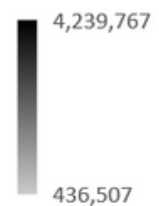
Aberdeen City	£1,159,429
Aberdeenshire	£674,599
Angus	£837,701
Argyll and Bute	£822,907
Clackmannanshire	£469,217
Dumfries and Galloway	£942,629
Dundee City	£1,209,824
East Ayrshire	£787,883
East Dunbartonshire	£598,580
East Lothian	£1,090,202
East Renfrewshire	£691,653
City of Edinburgh	£2,363,554
Falkirk	£904,074
Fife	£1,223,984
Glasgow City	£4,239,767
Highland	£2,175,176
Inverclyde	£928,944
Midlothian	£861,668
Moray	£660,659
Na h-Eileanan Siar	£438,148
North Ayrshire	£908,655
North Lanarkshire	£1,711,326
Orkney Islands	£436,507
Perth and Kinross	£844,511
Renfrewshire	£998,426
Scottish Borders	£617,580
Shetland Islands	£571,746
South Ayrshire	£649,100
South Lanarkshire	£1,464,748
Stirling	£575,831
West Dunbartonshire	£851,718
West Lothian	£754,766

National funding £14,004,582

Total £47,470,093



Funding Amount (£)





“Inspiring Scotland being the link between charities and funders really helps for the relationship to work in both directions”
2025 partner survey respondent

Playing our collective part

Scotland’s voluntary sector is under acute pressure. Demand for services is rising, while funding remains uncertain and short-term. This fragility threatens the sustainability of vital work and the wellbeing of the people and communities who rely on it.

At Inspiring Scotland, we recognise the urgency of need. We are proud to support the sector not only by managing Scottish Government funding programmes that provide stability and scale, but also by working innovatively with philanthropists to unlock new sources of long-term investment. Our approach is rooted in partnership, trust, and a shared commitment to lasting impact. Together, we will continue to invest in solutions, advocate for sustainable funding, and build a Scotland where everyone has the chance to thrive.

We also recognise that giving time, energy, and professional skills as a volunteer is a powerful catalyst for change. It strengthens organisations, builds capacity, and resilience. That’s why we’re committed to sustaining our Specialist Volunteer Network and put it to good use.

What the sector needs is consistent, long-term funding and long-term support—that enables organisations to plan and deliver effectively and sustainably. We are committed to making this happen.

As we look ahead, we remain hopeful. Not because the challenges are small, but because the investors and partners we work with are bold, determined, and deeply committed to change.

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